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**EL7001-8**

**Dr. Glen Gatin**

**Principles and Practices of E-Learning**

**Assignment 2a: e-Learning Technologies –  
Reflective Paper**

**Student Comments:** Please see prezi presentation at  
[http://prezi.com/73vvd1m44u9q/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](http://prezi.com/73vvd1m44u9q/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)

**Faculty Use Only**

Good work on this, Michael. I like social ecology theory and it is a very appropriate lens for this discussion? See my comments below.

I am using dial up internet this week so I am unable to view your Prezi but I will look at it next week You have time to add narration ☺ ).

Gatin July 2, 2013

A Reflection on Useful e-Learning Resources

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#### A Reflection on Useful e-Learning Resources

Educators and administrators of XYZ school system (A pseudonym for my school district) are just beginning to open up to the ideas of using social media and informational technologies to drive instruction. Many teachers have embedded the use of computers and the internet into their lessons for years. However, this has been done in the traditional classroom setting where students have used these tools merely to retrieve or input information. With the need to decrease our school system's student achievement gap there is now, more than ever, a sense of urgency to transform education into something new and innovative. In this assignment I

focused on the rapid growth of informational technologies and the emergence of social media. The purpose was to identify and explain, to teachers and administrators, Web2.0 resources that are affordable, easy to use, and have the most potential for student online success.

### Reflection on Socio-cultural Ecology

When we think of education, we often focus on the traditional face-to-face classroom interactions where the student is receiving information from the teacher and required to memorize much of what's presented. By this definition there isn't a whole lot of application or synthesis happening with what's being learned, if anything. ~~However there is an approach to online learning called~~ Socio-cultural ecology, defined by the London Mobile Learning Group (LMLG), as "learning governed by a triangular relationship between socio-cultural structures, cultural practices and the agency of media users / learners, represented in the three domains" (2013). This approach helps teachers frame their pedagogy around three interrelated domains of importance as they implement online teaching strategies.

Socio-cultural ecology focuses on three relationship domains that the LMLG call agency, cultural practices, and structures. Agency is simply the learning habits of young people, which are rapidly changing with the increase of mobile technologies. Cultural practices are the routines users engage in their everyday lives as they utilize technology and the structures refers to the technology structures that governs those technologies in the world. The learning theory is non-hierarchical in that the teacher's focus can be made on any of the three domains, at any given time, in any given order.

### Identifying the Resources

"In order for technology to be used effectively in the classroom, a teacher has to make sure they are using it as part of an approach..." (Rice, Cullen, & Davis, 2011, p. 11). By understanding

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**Comment [1]:** Avoid the editorial we in academic writing. Use we only if the work of two authors is being presented/

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**Comment [2]:** Avoid colloquial language in academic writing.

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**Comment [3]:** ...is

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**Comment [4]:** How has this theory been tested with empirical research? What gaps remain in the research? Could you see this as an appropriate theoretical frame for your dissertation research?

the Socio-cultural ecology theory teachers can begin to transition from merely utilizing technology in the classroom as assistive information devices to understanding which resources are appropriate and useful as vehicles for online learning. According to a study, conducted by Agyei and Voowhen, entitled the Will, Skill, Tool model, ~~there are~~ three stages of technology adoption ~~that~~ must be considered before teachers begin using the identified resources successfully (2011). The teacher's attitude towards the technology, their willingness to choose and participate in the online resources, and the quality of experience the teacher has with the resources being selected (pp. 92-93). These stages of technology adoption must be considered before teachers can be expected to implement social and informational technologies successfully in an online classroom environment.

### Twitter and Skype

Traditionally, social media applications such as Twitter and Skype have been used for entertainment purposes, but recently, their integration into classroom environments is changing how students and teachers interact and communicate. Awareness of social media has increased by 81% since 2008 with Twitter leading the way (Kassens-Noor, 2012). Skype offers an opportunity to incorporate face-to-face interactions in online learning environments and allows learners to connect with teachers who desire that one-on-one instruction. Twitter allows students and teachers to participate in peer discussion groups by dialoguing about class content and activities. Tweeting and Skyping ~~is~~ free and ~~facilitates~~ social media in education, which increases student's active participation in online environments.

### VoiceThread and Glogster

Digital storytelling is widely being used in the classroom and is an easy media for teachers to use as they transition from classroom to online learning environments. VoiceThread

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and Glogster are good examples of free web-based digital storytelling applications that enable learners to upload pictures, documents, record voice and video, insert hyperlinks, and collaboratively interact with the products they create. Teachers create a positive learning environment when learners are encouraged to use their creativity and imaginations. Learners are eager to participate in classroom environments where the process of creating, student choice, and individualized instruction are valued.

### **Dropbox and Google docs**

Online resources such as Dropbox and Google docs are considered cloud-computing applications, fairly new to information technology, and are rapidly changing our everyday life. Cloud computing relies on the sharing of resources and focuses on maximizing the efficiency of online learning by providing applications which support real time collaboration, monitoring student participation, and providing immediate feedback. Dropbox and Google docs are both easy to use, free online tools, in which students and teachers can effectively collaborate, share information, and work simultaneously on the same projects while never actually being in the same traditional classroom environment.

### **Preparing the Presentation**

As I began thinking about the assignment expectations I thought about my audience and how difficult it would be to talk about more online tools beneficial to the online learning environment without practicing what I was preaching, per say. I knew it needed to be a resource my audience hadn't seen used frequently in a faculty presentation and I immediately thought of two online resources, Prezi and GoAnimate. Due to the particular assignment expectations I chose to go with Prezi because it was mentioned as one of the presentation options and its similar to power point, which teachers are already comfortable using.

Prezi offers a virtual canvas, which allows the presenter to zoom in and out of their presentation and display and navigate information within a 2.5D space, which provides a more dynamic and interesting presentation. The uniqueness and use of Prezi, for this assignment, over traditional presentation tools, allows teachers to see the benefits of constantly changing technology and the potential it has to keep learners engaged in an online classroom environment. The idea was to present resources that are convenient, offers the teacher and student flexibility and offers collaborative features, in real time blended environments.

### Challenges

#### Presentation

The challenges I faced in creating this presentation was finding a web-based presenting tool that teachers hadn't seen used much in faculty presentations. Once I settled on Prezi I found that it did not allow the presenter to include presentation notes. I overcame this challenge by creating the Prezi presentation and then taking a snap shot of each "slide" and placing them in Microsoft Power Point. By doing this I was able to utilize the presenter note's feature in that application to include what I wanted to say about each transitional slide and point.

#### Paper

In writing the reflective paper I recognized two challenges, time and scholarly voice. Time was a concern from the start of this course because I will be on vacation for three weeks during the time course assignments will be due and I know I will likely struggle to meet course requirements. My goal was to finish assignment two before leaving for vacation but as I started working I found that simply restating main points and observations from the presentation part of the assignment, to save time, wasn't enough.

As I struggled to finish assignment two I realized that I had another concern to consider

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**Comment [8]:** Prezi now allows users to embed audio files to create a narrated presentation which does not require notes.

that might impact the time line I set for myself. I was having difficulty with finding my scholarly voice and I paused to consider the number of possibilities, which could be inhibiting my writing. Was it my kids? Was it my time management? As I started to approach the end of my paper I realized that I had started to become finely tuned and critical of my own writing and much time was spent struggling to negotiate my way into a scholarly academic space (Potgieter & Smit, 2009 January). I found myself constantly revising my work, reading related articles, and searching for the latest data to support my thoughts and ideas. I've concluded that the writing process naturally takes time and that recognizing this turns what I thought was a challenge into a positive self-reflection on the develop of my scholarly voice.

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**Comment [10]:** It is a learned process like any other and takes time, practice and feedback. You are making steady progress.

### References

- Agyei, D.D., & Voogt, J.M., (2011). Exploring the potential of the will, skill, tool model in Ghana: predicting prospective and practicing teachers' use of technology. *Computers & Education*, 56 (1), pp. 91–100. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131510002381>
- Kanssens-Noor, E. (2012 March). Twitter as a teaching practice to enhance active and informal learning in higher education: The case of sustainable tweets. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 13(1), pp. 9-21. doi: 10.1177/1469787411429190
- London Mobile Learning Group (2012, December 13). Theory. Retrieved from <http://www.londonmobilelearning.net/#theory.php>
- Potgieter, F., & Smit, B., (2009 January). Finding academic voice: A critical narrative of

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**Comment [11]:** Great resource!

knowledge-making and discovery. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15(1), pp. 214-228. doi: 10.1177/1077800408322792

Rice, K., Cullen, J., & Davis, F. (2011). Technology in the classroom: The impact of teacher's technology use and constructivism. Retrieved from [http://www.farnoushdavis.com/projects/504/Cullen\\_Davis\\_%20Final\\_Synthesis\\_6.pdf](http://www.farnoushdavis.com/projects/504/Cullen_Davis_%20Final_Synthesis_6.pdf)